

Dear Co-Chair Woods, Co-Chair Gomberg,

I want to thank you for the opportunity to present the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs Governor's Recommended Budget. I appreciate the thoughtful discussion and questions on our budget. Below I provide responses to questions that were left unanswered during the testimony.

Rep Skarlatos

Does ODVA track the number of Combat Veterans in the State of Oregon

Response: ODVA receives most of its Veteran data from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, and they do not provide data on the number of Veterans that served in combat. They only provide the number of Veterans that served during different war eras - which we report out regularly.

Additionally, Per the [USDVA M21-1, Part IV, Subpart ii, Chapter 1, Section D, 13. d.](#) Combat veterans are identified when they are in receipt of specific combat decorations listed on their DD214 or DD215. The regulation goes on to say, "Receipt of one of the decorations cited above is not the only acceptable evidence of engagement in combat."

Veterans can submit evidence to support a claim of direct involvement in combat and it is also important to note that our Veterans Service Officer network can help veterans apply for an amendment to their DD214 if they believe that a medal is missing that would establish their "combat veteran" status. This alludes to the importance of improving the states' ability to collect our own data on Veterans. We have and continue to advocate that the more we know about Oregon veterans the better we'll be able to serve them.

Rep Nguyen

How many employees are at each State Veteran Home?

Response: Veterans Care Center of Oregon (VCCO) under Westcare is the contracted service provider for both Oregon Veterans Homes in The Dalles and Lebanon. Under the contract VCCO Westcare hires its own employees. The Dalles has 190 contracted employees, and Lebanon has 235 contracted employees.

Sen Meek

Provide data on VSO claims work

Response: Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) are certified trained professionals and are subject matter experts in federal Title 38 law, allowing them to represent veterans in filing disability and pension claims to the federal VA without cost.

ODVA's Training, Certification and Outreach (TCO) team ensures that all Oregon VSOs are trained and certified (leading to USDVA accreditation), by way of our robust and in-depth training program. ODVA also has a dedicated Appeals Team that is co-located with the USDVA's regional Veterans Benefits Administration Office in Portland. The Appeals Team focuses on filing and representing denied claims in front of the USDVA Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA).

In FY 2024, the Appeals Team conducted 226 federal VA appeals on behalf of veterans and their families. These appeals are a contributing factor to the significant retroactive payments awarded to veterans on Oregon. Retroactive awards for individuals represented by ODVA in FY 2024 exceeded \$58 million. There were 9,873 new veteran claimants represented by ODVA's Appointments of

Representation (Powers of Attorney) and 16,129 new disability claims awarded totaling more than \$13.4 million in service-connected or disability compensation or pension payments. Appointments of Representation (Powers of Attorney) executed by Oregon veterans and their families allow state and county veterans service officers throughout the state to represent veterans or their survivors in claims.

Additional conversation on the Agency KPMs was acknowledged. Since taking the helm at ODVA, I have addressed our KPMs with the team and the agency is evaluating current targets and have been engaged in restructuring all KPMs. We will work with the LFO KPM Administrator to make appropriate recommended changes.

Once again, thank you and I look forward to working with each of you as we continuously focus on taking care of our Veterans.

Dr. Nakeia Council Daniels
Director

Office 503 373 2383

700 Summer Street NE | Salem, Oregon 97301

[Visit ODVA online](#) | [Follow us on FB](#) | [Get emails from ODVA](#)

Best,

Dr. Daniels



Dr. Nakeia Council Daniels
Director

Office 503 373 2383

700 Summer Street NE | Salem, Oregon 97301

[Visit ODVA online](#) | [Follow us on FB](#) | [Get emails from ODVA](#)



24/7 Confidential help for veterans and their families in crisis
Call 988 PRESS 1 | Text 838255 | Chat www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/chat